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THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF SACRED LITERATURE.

GENERAL INSTITUTE NOTES.

The Reading Guild.

The list of books for Reading Guild for the coming year has been slightly altered since the last issue of the BIBLICAL WORLD. It now stands as follows:

1. *In the Time of Jesus*,¹ Seidel, 90 cents. 2. *The Beginnings of Christianity*, Fisher (abridged), \$1.25. 3. *The Records and Letters of the Apostolic Age*,² Burton, \$1.25. 4. *The Apostolic Age*, Pressensé, \$1.00. 5. American Institute Essays in Biblical Literature, Nos. 1 to 10 of the New Testament Series,³ \$1.00: (1) How Rome governed the Provinces; (2) The Jewish Dispersion of the First Century; (3) The Chronology of the Apostolic Age; (4) The Conversion of Saul; (5) The Rome of Paul's Day; (6) The Transitions from Judaism to Christianity and from Judaic Christianity to Universal Christianity; (7) Saul's Personal Experience as a Factor in his Theology; (8) The Personal Character of Peter, Paul and John as Effecting their Special Work; (9) The Theology of Paul and John Compared; (10) The Christianity of the First Century. 6. *The Biblical World*,⁴ \$1.50.

Material may be ordered at once, although a few of the books will not be ready until October 1. The reading in the BIBLICAL WORLD commences with the present number.

Bible Club Work.

Reference has been made to an article by the Rev. O. C. S. Wallace of Toronto, on the practical value of a Bible Club in the Church. We are accustomed to emphasize the value of such a club to its members, but the statements of Mr. Wallace concerning the value of the leadership of such a class to the pastor himself, statements made from his own experience in such

¹ Not required for second year members.

² The Acts and the Epistles arranged for historical study.

³ Ten pamphlets prepared by men eminent in New Testament work, covering periods not fully treated in the books of the course. This New Testament series of the American Institute Essays is edited by Professor Ernest DeWitt Burton, and published by the Institute. It cannot be obtained elsewhere.

⁴ This is a special price to members of the Guild, and can be obtained only through the Institute. The subscription price to all others is \$2.00.

work are new and forceful. We give them below for the benefit of the pastors among our readers :

"The advantage of Bible Club leadership to the pastor is large. It quickens him intellectually, enriches him biblically, inspires him homiletically, and greatly increases him influentially.

"It compels him to study the Bible comprehensively. Study of the Bible for sermon preparation is dangerous when taken alone. Many preachers will confess that the Bible has become to them little more than a repository of texts. When they read a prophecy or a gospel, a psalm or an epistle, it is with a wide open eye for something which can be worked into the next Sunday's sermon. He who reads the Bible thus is like the mountain climber who ever walks stooping, peering closely for a sight of pebbles or blossoms in his path, but never lifting up his eyes to survey the landscape. The world is suffering from narrow horizons. When the preacher's view is narrow, the people who listen to his teachings will see only close paths and comfortable rests, when they should see, in addition to these, those vast expanses of light and life and glory which God has given in his Scriptures for the edification and delectation of his people.

"It furnishes to the preacher an abundance of sermonic material. Instead of finding it necessary to search for texts, he has only to choose from the many which throng him, inviting his study and promising comfort and strength to those who shall hear as he interprets. He who instructs, by the question and answer method, a class of intelligent, alert Christians in a Bible Club course need never be compelled to turn over the leaves of his Bible in nervous and distracted haste to find a text from which he can evolve a message suited to the hour ; for the Bible when diligently studied, proves itself to be a storehouse of material which is rich and varied, and timely as well. If any one finds it less than this, the explanation must be looked for in his own want of diligence or of method in Bible study.

"It suggests to him new lines of investigation. The Bible Club materials, while requiring a study of the text of Scripture first of all and chiefly, are so prepared as to lead the mind into new channels. These materials are arranged by specialists, who not only know the text of the Scriptures treated, but are also familiar with the literature which has grown up around such portions of Scripture, and though novel theories are not thrust upon the attention of the student, nor dogmatic assertions made concerning the unknown or untried, the lessons are so wisely and ably presented that they are valuably suggestive.

"Whatever increases the pastor's fitness to preach is an advantage to the Church. When this improvement of qualifications on the part of the pastor is attended by a corresponding improvement in the attainments of a considerable number of the members of the Church, the advantage is yet greater. Herein the value of the Bible Club appears. Its influence upon the Church is exemplary, educational and doctrinally unifying.

"It sets an example of earnest Bible Study. The people have before them continually an object lesson which reminds or assures or persuades them that the pastor and a certain number of others believe it to be worth while to study the Bible more than the ordinary Christian studies it ; and that it is also worth while to be as persevering and earnest in the learning of Bible lessons as in learning lessons in purely secular subjects. This is an idea which has not yet gained full possession of the ordinary mind. The Bible is 'searched,' perhaps, but rather for texts than truth, for promises than knowledge, and for comforts in dark hours than for that full comprehension of God's revelation which will keep the soul continually in the light. The Bible Club is at once a protest and an invitation. It protests against that neglect of the Scriptures which is the habit of the many, and invites all to a study which shall remove from the Christian church the reproach of indifference to God's revelation. At the beginning the number affected may not be large, but if the work is continued persistently and faithfully, the influence must increase in breadth and power, and the church be lifted to higher planes.

"It raises up in the church a class of men and women who are qualified to teach the Scriptures. In many churches it is difficult to find teachers for the classes in the Sunday school. Yet more difficult is it to find competent teachers. If the average Christian, who perhaps knows a great many precious texts, from which he has derived comfort many times, and who understands well the way of salvation through Jesus Christ, is called upon suddenly to take charge of a class in the Sunday school, he urges his want of preparation, and dares not face the class with only the Bible as a help. His caution is prudent. With only the Bible in hand, the lesson would be a blank to him. He knows so little of the Scriptures that before he can teach an ordinary passage even passably he must make careful preparation. This surely ought not to be. A Christian of average intelligence, who has reached mature years, ought to be so familiar with a large portion of the Scriptures that he would not feel himself utterly lost if brought suddenly face to face with an ordinary Sunday school lesson. To remove this ignorance, and consequent want of preparation for service, the Bible Club enters the church. Its work is done thoroughly and without haste. The Scriptures are studied methodically and systematically. There is drill upon the great outlines of history and doctrine, until these have lodged in the mind to abide. Then all future reading enlarges the crystallizations around these fixed portions of truth, and the student becomes competent to teach, at a moment's notice, with some degree of intelligence, and, if permitted time to make special preparation, he can bring forth out of the treasure house of the Word things new and old. The presence in a church of a considerable number of persons thus equipped is obviously an inestimable blessing.

"It tends to secure a unification of doctrinal views. Teaching from the pulpit is often a shot fired at long range, but teaching, when the members of the class have opportunity to state difficulties, ask explanations, and make their

own offering of suggestion or friendly criticism, is shooting at short range, and he who shoots at short range, if he carries ammunition at all, is pretty certain to hit the target. In this restless, doctrinally throbbing, eagerly investigating age, the pastor needs to meet his people closely in Bible study. An illuminating word, spoken by him at the right moment, may save a soul from long months or years of darkness. In the Bible Club the opportunity for this is given, and, besides the help which he can be to those who engage in study with him, through the discovery he there is able to make of problems which are being discussed by the members of his flock, he can become warned so to mould his pulpit utterances as to help many others."

The above statements could be echoed by many another active, progressive minister.